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A PLAIN ROOM MADE PRETTY.

THERE are many rooms in many houses that appear, at first sight, to be beyond the aid of decoration to make them anything other than a square, barn-like apartment. Almost every home has its one undesirable room, perhaps its light is limited, possibly the ceiling may be slanting, or there may be other disagreeable features about it that make it uninviting and unpromising. When we meet such an obstacle we ask at once how to overcome it, and it can be overcome only by judicious and tasteful decorating and furnishing.

Let us then, for an example, take one of these discouraging places and try to make it habitable. We will begin with a square room, the walls measuring, say, twelve feet or probably fifteen, with a ceiling between eleven and twelve feet high; one of the ordinary windows with two sashes; door with four panels; an old or new (so far as that goes) marble mantel; a cast iron stove; common board floor, and a whitewashed ceiling with one of the conventional plaster ornaments in the centre; whitewashed walls, or perhaps papered with some of the trash we find in the general run of such rooms; and finally, poorly lighted.

It is understood that we must light up the room and yet maintain sufficient color in the groundwork of the walls, to serve as a backing for our pictures. The room is too

high for its other dimensions to begin with, and so to bring it into better apparent proportion we will lay it out in horizontal lines, beginning about five feet below the ceiling with a picture molding, thus marking the termination of the frieze. This frieze may be colored as delicately, and its ornamentation made as airy and ethereal as is desired; creamy tints with ochre to emphasize them occasionally, a vine running over it, or some design of a like character, a semblance of the evening or morning light, the soft, mellow, golden glow of a setting sun, are excellent suggestions for this part of the work. The ceiling might have a patterned paper, but this would detract from its lightness, so we merely tint it in a creamy yellow.

Having thus laid out and colored the upper part of the walls, it would be an excellent idea to fix about the room a very narrow shelf just above the picture molding, bringing it on a level with the top of the door, or in the neighborhood of seven feet from the floor. This shelf is for the reception of such pieces of bric-a-brac as may be had to place upon it.

Below this shelf and molding comes the wall space upon which the pictures are to hang, and here we must have our mind upon the double necessity of a light surface and a picture ground. That space we should have a warm tone of russet-olive, and at the bottom limit, which is, say, four feet or less above the floor, making the picture space about two feet six inches wide, there should be a slight molding standing out not more than two inches. Beneath this point then is the dado, which may be papered or painted, or hangings may be used of leather paper, burlaps, a light framing of wood, India matting, or any such material as may strike the fancy. This may also be olive in color, but a darker shade than the wall space. Gradations of tone in a wall are always pleasant where the wall is divided laterally as in this case, and a stuff for the dado hanging we lately saw of a golden russet-green, a beautiful shade of pale olive and brown worsted with a large square diaper pattern of gold radiating from a centre, would seem to accord with the greenish gold dashes in the frieze.

The woodwork must not be forgotten; indeed it comes almost first in actual execution, and the previous steps refer to tests and trials of paper and stuffs rather than to their then application. In reality everything in a scheme of decoration should

be seen as nearly in its place as possible, before a stroke of work is commenced. Even after such precautions, many things may have to be modified or altered in actual working, as it requires long experience to judge from small samples what the effect will be of broader masses of color, although a practised eye will be able to gauge the result within a little. The portions to be painted are the door and shutters, the skirting, and the two dividing moldings round the room, which separate the three courses of wall color one from the other. For a room so dimly lighted the paint must not be dark, nor is it required above a medium tone; this would not only be out of character with the scheme, but it is an undoubted fact that in a small room the projecting woodwork of doors, shutters and moldings is sure to get rubbed and damaged, particularly in a man's room. Chocolate is too dark, though it would harmonize, especially if mixed with a little green to give it an olive complexion. A deep Venetian red would do very well, but it might look heavy and is the reverse of retiring, whereas in a small room, where there is any considerable quantity of woodwork, a too powerful color will obtrude itself upon us. Ultimately we choose a gray-blue, that is a blue toned down with black and white, perhaps a little green, until we get a neutralized color, yet sufficiently assertive to contrast pleasingly with the wall. Gray-blue, however thus composed, cannot be said to be "warm;"

be indulged in, or may simply be furnished with a grate. Should the small expense be no obstacle, let the opening be embellished with red unglazed tiles, cemented to the rough sides and back, and also replacing the hearthstone. Then a basket or movable grate may be set in the opening. In summer a grate of this sort can be removed to make way for flowers or a lattice frame to admit the air.

The recesses on either side of the mantel should be arranged with shelves and cupboards, for books, etc. These range with the shelf molding at bottom of frieze, and the entire thing painted gray-blue, red would give a preponderance to that color in connection with the mantel that would be objectionable. A cupboard at the base of one bookcase and an embroidered curtain at the other, gives balance.

The panels of the doors may be filled with a patterned flock paper exactly matching the gray-blue of the paint, the surface and the pattern alone betokening the difference. A brass handle and finger-places tell very well against the color of the door and light up a dark corner.

The dado hangings are supported by a small iron rod at the top and to which they are attached by hooks and eyes, while another iron rod, a very few inches from the floor, holds the hanging in position at the bottom. The hangings are gathered into folds at every foot and a-half and tightly stretched from top to bottom.

The windows can be improved by rough cathedral glass, and obscured at night by a curtain of deep coral red wool.

Our preference would be for antique-appearing furniture, and a rug, or a piece of carpet with a wide border of bright canton flannel sewed about it, may cover the floor. Pictures, brackets and ornaments must be left very much to the taste and the means of the tenant. A few fans fitted about the walls, and in corners, such as shown on another page of this work, produce pretty effects, and we shall show each month means for utilizing other handy and economical articles.



A PLEASANT CORNER.

and our room is cold, looking northward; and seems to want that touch of red without which no picture is said to be quite satisfactory. Indeed we could endure rather more than a touch of red in this room, but where to put it? Parti-colored woodwork is a thing to be deprecated, because the joinery of a room is manifestly all of a piece, and a blue door and red skirting board at once detaches it. A blue door with red panels would be possible, but patchy. Red moldings might divide the wall courses, only the gray-blue is less hard and cutting, so we refrain from altering it.

We now come to the marble mantel, which in all the hideousness of a stained and dirty white or cheap and cheerless gray or black, is a horrible sight. So we paint the mantel, and it would be well to select a deep crimson-toned Venetian red. Above the mantel is placed an arrangement of shelves and small cupboards all painted the same red, a few bits of brass, handles, hinges, etc., picked up at odd times, relieve the surface, and a few books, ornaments, etc., conclude this decoration.

At this time of year we must have fires, and yet the stove "must go." The stove "means well," but it is simply intolerable in appearance, especially those wretched little sheet iron cylinders. The fire board generally conceals an opening that may be made quite artistic if a little expense can

paper may be any of the olive shades, or neutral greens; a touch of green in the pattern would not be objectionable. In staining woodwork do not put the coloring matter in the shellac, as it would then only be deposited on the surface like a paint. When used in the oil it acts as a filler filling the grain even with the surface. The oil should be applied with a brush, and the parts stained should be immediately wiped with a cloth, so that the stain may not dry on the surface, and give a muddy appearance to the wood. Ash may be stained of a yellowish green hue by the use of copperas, but we should not advise it unless in competent, experienced hands. The effect is rather startling, and some would declare the wood spoiled, but when the hangings and colorings of upholstery are in perfect harmony the effect is very good.

OAK treated with ammonia assumes a green tint of an olive shade, when more than one application is made it assumes a brown, still however retaining the green hue. However, the change may not be perceptible until oil or shellac is applied; strong water of ammonia should be used, it soon loses its strength by evaporation if left uncovered. The use of oil in any of these stained woods makes considerable difference in the results, as it helps to bring out the color and beauty of the grain.